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ABSTRACT

The career awareness miniseminars are designed to assist community college students in gaining awareness of various careers and occupations associated with the courses they are taking. These seminars are essentially group career guidance sessions conducted cooperatively by counselors and instructors. They are conducted in a classroom setting and are an integral part of the course offering. The seminars are designed as a means of providing career information services to students at their convenience rather than requiring them to seek out the information. This is especially important in educational settings where students basically spend time on campus only during their class hours--such is the case with commuting students. This publication is intended as a guide to developing and conducting career awareness miniseminars. The emphasis is on the community college, but the concept can be used in secondary schools and four-year colleges, or in any setting where clients are in need of career awareness services. (Author)

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CAREER AWARENESS
MINI SEMINARS
A GUIDE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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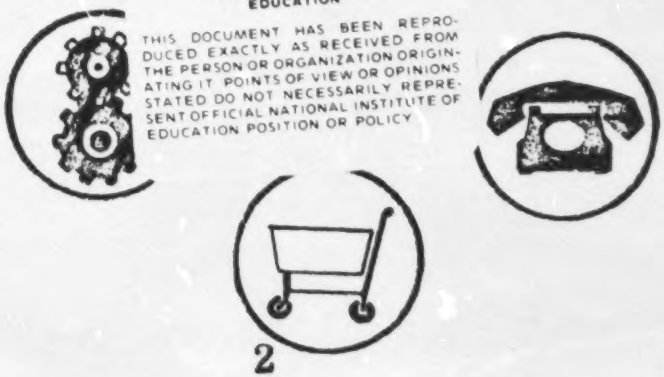


Career Awareness Mini-Seminars

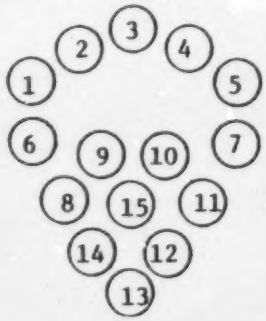
A Guide

Larry H. Hackney, Ph.D.
Calvin E. Williams, Ph.D.

Cover Design

The illustrations on the front cover are symbols of the fifteen (15) occupational clusters developed by the Office of Education. The cluster concept is an effort to abandon breaking down school curriculums into "vocational," "general," and "college preparatory" in favor of core curriculums covering job clusters.

The symbols represent the following job clusters:



1. Marketing and Distribution
2. Fine Arts and Humanities
3. Health
4. Hospitality and Recreation
5. Construction
6. Transportation
7. Business and Office
8. Personal Services
9. Public Services
10. Marine Science
11. Agri-business and Natural Sciences
12. Communication and Media
13. Consumer and Homemaking Education
14. Manufacturing
15. Environment

For additional information on the cluster concept, contact the Office of Education, Washington D.C.

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INTRODUCTION

Choosing a career or occupation is one of the most important decisions that an individual makes. In many cases, this decision is made several times during one's lifetime. Wise decision making regarding career and occupational choice is a process that involves consideration of numerous factors. One factor is of necessity an awareness of various careers and occupations.

The career awareness mini-seminars are designed to assist community college students in gaining awareness of various careers and occupations associated with the courses they are taking. These seminars are essentially group career guidance sessions conducted cooperatively by counselors and instructors. They are conducted in a classroom setting and are an integral part of the course offering.

The seminars are designed as a means of providing career information services to students at their convenience rather than requiring them to seek out the information. This is especially important in educational settings where students basically spend time on campus only during their class hours - such is the case with commuting students.

This publication is intended as a guide to developing and conducting career awareness mini-seminars. The emphasis is on the community college, but the concept can be used in secondary schools and four-year colleges, or in any setting where clients are in need of career awareness services.

STEP I

GETTING STARTED

Getting off on the right foot is of prime importance for the success of career awareness mini-seminars. Proper conduct of the seminars requires cooperation between counselors and instructional faculty members who are usually in different administrative divisions and/or departments. This, in effect, requires inter-departmental cooperation. Herein lies one of the positive aspects of the concept.

The concept can be initiated from any administrative level. The deans of the participating departments could decide upon procedural matters, or this could be accomplished by the directors or coordinators. Regardless of the starting point, all administrators and faculty personnel involved should be informed of the activities and procedural matters.

From this point, the counselors and instructional faculty members begin the planning of procedures for conducting the seminars. Among the items to be considered are:

1. Number of seminars to be held.

2. Scheduling of seminars.

3. Information to be disseminated (determined via a survey questionnaire administered prior to sessions).

4. Designing the questionnaire (to be discussed later).

5. Administering the questionnaire.

6. Feedback mechanism.

7. Follow-up.

Number of sessions

Since the seminars are conducted during regularly scheduled class sessions, it is important that a decision be made in the beginning as to the number of class sessions to be devoted to career awareness activities. The number of class sessions per term is predetermined, and instructors are expected to have pre-planned activities for each session. The inclusion of career seminars will require restructuring of the instructional plans for the course.

Length of class sessions should be considered in deciding on the number of sessions to be conducted. For example, a ninety minute or two hour class will require fewer sessions than a fifty minute class. It is suggested that one informational session and one follow-up be scheduled at the onset, with additional sessions scheduled if needed.

Scheduling

For purposes of continuity of presentation, seminars should be scheduled consecutively. In instances where this is not possible, they should be scheduled as closely together as possible rather than one at the beginning and another at the end of the term.

Another factor in scheduling the seminars is to arrange for presentation to more than one class at a time. For example, if the seminars

are being conducted for psychology students and more than one session meets at the same time, the classes could be combined. This would require the involvement of all instructors teaching psychology at that time period. In planning these joint seminars, space must be considered.

In cases where the same instructor is teaching several sessions of the same class but at different times, these sessions could be combined. This would require scheduling the seminars at a time and place convenient for the students in each of the sessions. This can be difficult, as some students will probably have other classes at hours when the joint seminars are scheduled. This procedure is not recommended if the seminar cannot be held during the hours when one of the classes is regularly scheduled. Changing the time to an hour when classes are not regularly scheduled decreases the attendance and the effectiveness.

Information to be Disseminated

The nature and type of information to be presented during the seminars should be determined jointly by the counselors, instructors, and students involved. Counselors and instructors can make the determination on the basis of experience, information available, and questions that have been posed by students.

In order to get student input, a survey questionnaire is used. This instrument is designed to elicit from the students questions they would like to have information on regarding careers and occupations in the area of discussion. Designing and administering the questionnaire will be discussed in succeeding sections of this guide.

Administering the Questionnaire

The questionnaire should be administered far enough in advance of the seminar so that sufficient data can be collected and analyzed. A maximum of one week is sufficient time to do this.

The questionnaire can be administered by the classroom instructor. The completed questionnaire is then forwarded to the individual responsible for collecting the data; this is usually the counselor.

Feedback and Follow-up

To determine the effectiveness of the seminars and to obtain data for future seminars, provisions for feedback should be made. Any of several techniques can be employed. Some suggestions include: a) providing students with a seminar evaluation form to be completed after each seminar, b) requiring students in composition type classes to write a short paper (one page) expressing their perceptions of the experience, or c) eliciting verbal responses.

Procedures for follow-up are essential to respond to questions or areas of concern not dealt with during the first seminar. The follow-up sessions are planned in much the same manner as the regular sessions.

STEP II

DEVELOPING THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The intent here is to construct a concise, but comprehensive, instrument for gathering information. Because the instrument is crucial in obtaining desired data, care must be taken in its development. It is essential that participating faculty members be involved in the development of the instrument to assure the inclusion of pertinent questions.

Since the ultimate objective is to design an instrument that will elicit responses from students regarding their needs for career awareness information, simplicity and comprehensiveness are vital factors to be considered.

The following questions are presented as examples of the types of items that can be included on the survey instrument.

1. Are you planning a major in this subject area or a related area?

2. Are you planning a minor in this or a related area?

3. Is there a branch of this area in which you are especially interested?

4. What kind of information would you need in order to decide on a career in this area?

5. What occupation(s) are you interested in, and do you think this course is related?

STEP III

ADMINISTERING THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

This procedure can be carried out by the counselor or instructor. For expediency, the instructor should administer the questionnaire during a regular class session prior to the conduct of the seminar. Administration by the instructor requires that the instructor be thoroughly familiar with the instrument in order to respond to questions students may have.

The counselor may also administer the instrument if this is deemed desirable. There are certain advantages to this procedure in that the counselor is usually the person who compiles, researches, and presents the information.

Students should be encouraged to be deliberate and thorough in responding to the questionnaire in that the information researched and presented will be determined by their responses.

The length of time necessary to administer the questionnaire is determined by the design of the instrument. A portion of one class period should be sufficient. Upon completion of the questionnaire, students should be encouraged to make any verbal responses regarding additional information they would like to have which is not covered on the survey instrument. These comments should be recorded and that information provided. Also, these verbal comments can be helpful in revising the instrument for future use.

STEP IV

RESEARCHING AND COMPILING THE DATA

A comprehensive library of career and occupational information can be most useful in researching the data. If one does not presently exist, this is a good starting point for developing one.

Sources of information are varied. Much of the information can be obtained free of charge from various professional organizations and college and university placement centers. Other information can be obtained from companies that prepare various kits and libraries of information. Information from these companies can be somewhat costly but worth the expenditure.

Attempting to find the desired information can be time-consuming but nevertheless productive. The most important aspect here is to rely upon sources that can provide the most relevant data.

Standard references such as the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (D.O.T.), the Occupational Outlook Handbook (O.O.H.), the Occupational Outlook Quarterly (O.O.Q.), and the Encyclopedia of Careers Vol. II can be valuable. In addition to the information contained in these publications, many list sources of additional information.

Local placement information from nearby college or university placement centers is valuable. Information on employment trends in the local area can be obtained as well as more general information.

The Employment Security Commission is another

source of information. It has been my experience, however, that the information obtained from this source is usually very general in nature and deals mainly with employment and unemployment data rather than occupational outlook.

Although data research is listed as Step IV in the process, general information collection should begin during the initial planning stage. This is especially important if the institution does not already have the information available.

As the information is collected and analyzed, it should be filed for future use. The filing system should be such that it is assessable for student use and/or distribution if copying facilities are available.

After carefully researching the necessary information, it is important to organize and arrange the data so that it can be presented effectively and efficiently.

This is a significant step because quite frequently there are very diverse career interests and questions voiced by the students. Codes or other abbreviated devices may be developed to include the quantity of material researched. Handouts which include an overview of the many career ideas expressed, degree levels required, sources of information, career groupings, etc. can be developed to cover considerable information quickly.

STEP V

THE SEMINAR EXPERIENCE

The seminar is the culmination of all the planning and data efforts to that point. The effectiveness of the seminar is dependent to a great extent upon how well previous steps have been carried out.

To begin the seminar, it is helpful to review what has transpired to date in terms of the survey and data collection. An overview of the field of discussion should be presented early in the presentation. The overview should include definitive information and areas of specialization within the broad category. For example, if the seminar is on careers and/or occupations in psychology, a beginning point would be a definition of psychology and psychologists, followed by a listing of the branches of psychology.

From this point the seminar would proceed according to the information requested by the students via the survey instrument. The discussion should include more specific information on career groupings, most common career patterns, educational requirements, job outlook, sources of employment, methods of entry, earnings, conditions of work, etc.

Generally speaking, the seminar should be constructed so that information is presented from the general to the specific.

Following the presentation, time should be alloted for open discussion and questions. A handout summarizing the discussion can be useful.

The handout should include sources of additional information. Students should be encouraged to do further career exploration and to work with their counselor regarding questions and uncertainty regarding career choice.

The seminar presentation can be as elaborate or as simple as preparation and presentation time permit. Overhead transparencies, charts, and audio visuals make the presentation more informative. However, if time and materials do not permit, a well-planned lecture presentation will suffice.

The intent of the seminar is not to assure students that they will have sufficient skills or knowledge to choose a career because of the seminar experience, but rather to provide information to students that will act as a catalyst for further exploration.

STEP VI

FEEDBACK

An experience such as the career awareness mini-seminar warrants an evaluative component. The individual and collective student opinion is obviously the single most important measure of the value this concept provides. By being mindful of the effect the presentation and subsequent discussion has produced, one can objectively and validly assess the impact of this service. This feedback can also be regarded as a yardstick by which student personnel effectiveness can be viewed as it relates to the accountability of time and how meaningful the department is to the student body, faculty, and institution as a whole.

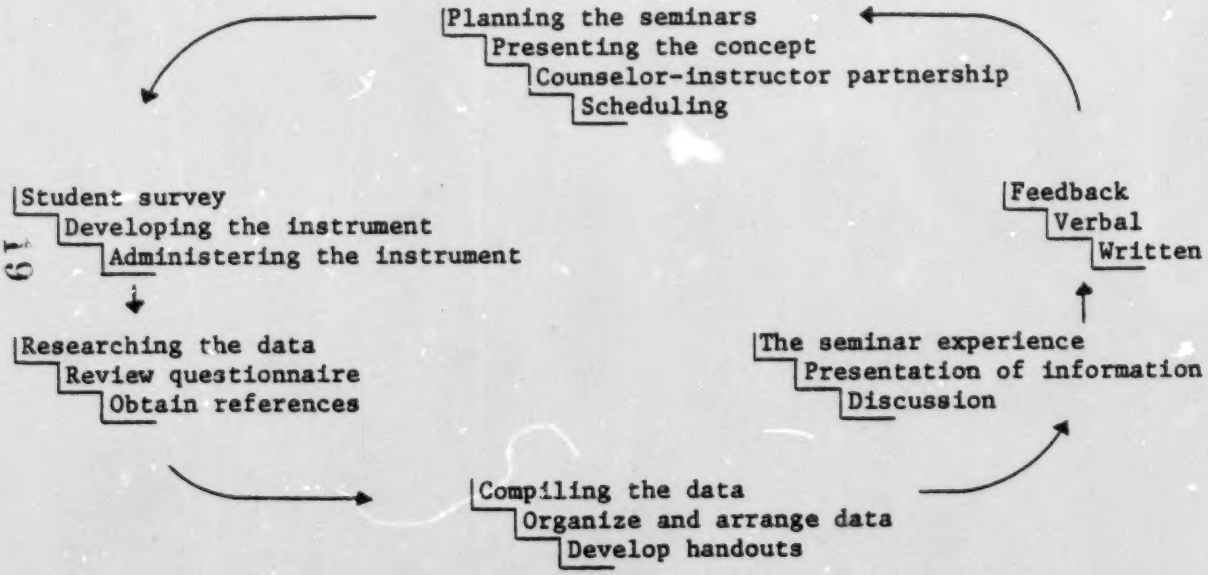
The feedback can serve to aid in modifying the presentation to better suit the needs of certain students.

Feedback can be obtained in a variety of ways. A form can be developed by the counselor or instructor to obtain evaluative information, or students can be instructed to write a short essay describing their opinions regarding the experience.

The latter is especially appropriate in classes that require composition writing as part of the requirements of the class.

Verbal feedback is also a viable means of assessing the value of the experience.

CAREER AWARENESS MINI-SEMINARS MODEL



CONCLUSION

The most unique aspect of these seminars is that they are conducted in a regular classroom setting. One of the major problems in providing career information is reaching the clients. Experience has shown that many students in need of career awareness information do not seek assistance, for whatever reason. They do not frequent the career information center or seek information from counselors or other helpful individuals. Taking the informational services to them in the classroom, where they would ordinarily be, alleviates this problem.

Conducting the seminars in the classroom as part of the course offering has other advantages.

1. It combines the academic with the practical.

2. It provides a catalyst for greater teamwork between instructional faculty and counselors.

3. It contributes to the effectiveness of instruction.

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